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# ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet

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## Environmental Management Systems

### Increased Environmental Awareness

One of the most significant societal movements over the last third of the 20th Century in the United States and around the world has been the rise in environmental awareness. As the new century begins, this awareness is moving beyond the enthusiasm of environmental groups and the vigilance of those charged with enforcing the laws of the nation. Environmental awareness is now shaping the actions of leading corporations.

### EMS: A Management Tool

A significant tool corporations are now using to manage and improve their environmental impacts is the Environmental Management System. An environmental management system (EMS) is a comprehensive, organized and documented system for an organization to manage holistically all of its actions that affect the environment. The EMS most commonly followed in the United States is described in the international standard ISO 14001.

### Key Attributes of the EMS

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) encourages New Hampshire businesses to use comprehensive EMSs following models such as ISO 14001. The key attributes of EMS use that DES wants to encourage are:

- Knowledge of the laws and regulations that affect an organization and the clear commitment to comply with those laws and regulations. DES has found that simple ignorance of what laws and regulations affect an organization has led to environmental damage in many cases. Better knowledge of the requirements will clearly help.
- Improving environmental awareness throughout the entire organization. By involving every employee in managing environmental affairs, environmental concerns and a pollution prevention ethic becomes a part of everything that everyone in an organization does.
- Managing and improving performance on non-regulated environmental activities. Many, perhaps most, of the ways an organization impacts the environment are not regulated. Energy use is a prime example. An EMS provides the framework for an organization to save money and reduce the environmental impact of energy consumption.

- Improving performance on regulated environmental matters beyond the levels prescribed by law. These legally-required levels describe the minimum acceptable performance. Achieving full sustainability requires better-than-compliance performance, DES encourages this and EMS use provides the framework for an organization to do that.
- Improving economic performance by improving environmental performance. Better environmental performers tend to be better economic performers; they are more efficient at using their materials and resources, wasting less.
- Certification by accredited third-party auditors that the EMS meets the ISO 14001 standard. Internally, many organizations report that having outside auditors come in at regular intervals helps them to stay focused on environmental performance. Externally, many audiences find increased credibility and trust in an organization's environmental performance from having outside auditors review an organization's system and from actually seeing the results of the audit and the system's performance.

### **DES Policy**

DES encourages companies to manage their environmental affairs in a comprehensive, proactive manner, as with the ISO 14001 EMS. DES also encourages companies to proactively communicate with their neighbors and the general public about how they are managing environmental affairs and to take these peoples' concerns into account in their EMS.

### **For More Information**

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